

Last-gasp goal from Armstrong saves Boro

Middlesbrough 1, Wycombe Wanderers 0

DAVID ARMSTRONG released the pent-up emotions of 30,000 Middlesbrough fans when he scored the goal that put brave Wycombe Wanderers out of the FA Cup last night.

For 89 minutes at Ayresome Park the Isthmian League side survived against the team from Division One. But then Armstrong struck, and on the final whistle of this unbelievable tie the relief of the Boro fans swept across the stadium.

And small wonder. They had watched their team battle away against one of the pluckiest defences seen at Ayresome Park for many a day.

The partmers stood up gallantly to everything thrown at them and extra time looked a certainty until Greame Souness pushed a lethal pass through the middle and Armstrong coolly steered the ball into the net, just inside the right hand post.

The terraces erupted, but there was tremendous sympathy for the Wycombe players. As the whistle blew

By CLIFF MITCHELL

the crowd rose to them. The Wanderers went into the middle of the field and waved in acknowledgement. Then the Middlesbrough players formed a tunnel to the dressing room and applauded their rivals off the field.

In the closing stages especially, Middlesbrough exerted tremendous pressure and sometimes it was a miracle the Wycombe goal survived.

In the space of eight minutes towards the end

David Mills shot straight at goalkeeper John Maskell when he was through on his own. Alan Willey hit the bar with Maskell helpless; Willey beat three men in brilliant style but had his final shot saved and John Hickton after having one centre superbly cut out by Maskell, shot wide with a great chance.

When all this and all that had gone before failed to produce a goal, it looked as though we were going to have a repeat of the goalless draw on the Wanderers sloping pitch on Saturday.

Applause

Maskell made a brilliant save from Souness in the first half, but for all their pressure Boro never looked menacing enough to hold out any hopes of a convincing win and Boro goalkeeper Jim Platt had to be alert to keep out shots from Howard Kennedy and Steve Perrin.

Wanderers went off at half-time with appreciative applause ringing in their ears.

Again in the second half they were pushed back on to defence for long spells but there was no penetration from Middlesbrough.

But after only 60 minutes manager Jack Charlton substituted Willey for Alan Foggon who had not made much impression — though he could rightly complain of lack of telling services.

Willey headed against the bar with Maskell a spectator and the crowd was kept on tenterhooks right to the end.

Overall this was never a match between a team at the top of Division One and another in a remote league at the other end of the country. The tremendous fighting spirit of the Wycombe men was wonderful to see — but in the end perhaps they could not really have any complaints at going out.

Errors

In spite of some slack work and despite the fact they allowed honest workmen to harass them into errors, Middlesbrough carved out many more clear cut chances.

But they will not want to come up against non league opposition for a long, long time to come.

As it is they entertain Sunderland in the fourth round and will be looking forward to that match more than they did to last night's.

Maybe they won't win it for Sunderland must rank as one of the best teams in the country today, but at least Boro will be up against a league side.

MERIT MARKS. — Platt 7, Crags 7, Spraggan 7, Souness 7, Boam 7, Maddren 7, Charlton 6, Mills 7, Hickton 8, Foggon 7, Armstrong 8, Sub: Willey 8.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS. — Maskell, Birdseye, Hand, Mead, Phillips, Breton, Perrin, Kennedy, Searle, Homefield, Horseman Sub: Evans.

Jackie is relieved

A VASTLY relieved Middlesbrough manager Jack Charlton said: "I am glad it's all over. The worst thing was there was nothing I could do but sit on the bench.

"Wycombe's defence never lost control throughout the game and they did tremendously well. At half-time I did not give my lads any particular instructions because I just didn't think they could keep on missing chances like they did."

Wycombe manager Brian Lee said he was proud of the way his men played and added: "Middlesbrough can repay us by going all the way. I think they have the character to do it."